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the Turn-of-the-Century Discourse(s) of Friendship
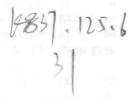
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前言

2008年9月,我初到美国,计划在纽约州立大学访学一年。指导我博士论文的普瑞斯(Majorie Pryse)教授邀我同去华顿的故居参观,这自然是我求之不得的美事。我们早上从校园驱车出发,穿过秀丽的哈德逊河,不久就到了麻省。华顿的山屋(The Mount)就在离州界不远的地方。10点不到,我们已经到了大门口。等了一小会儿,身兼三职的守门人开始出售门票,由他贴上象征客人的小纸片后,我们正式进入山屋的领地。这栋别墅是华顿和波士顿世家子弟爱德华·华顿结婚后,由她自己设计并建造的。此后,华顿在山屋中分别于1905年和1907年完成了《欢乐之家》和《树之果》。九年后,夫妻二人决定出售山屋,并正式离婚,伊迪斯·华顿则独自移居巴黎。离婚后的伊迪斯·华顿保留了华顿的姓氏,而山屋也就成为女作家的美国记忆中唯一的家园了。

沿着石头路,两边都是高大的树木,使人仿佛有在森林中漫步的悠闲感觉。我和普瑞斯教授一路说说笑笑,不经意间就发现那山屋出现在路的尽头。山屋前开辟出一条莱檬树的林荫道,道路两端便是华顿的花园。虽然临近深秋,左边法国式花园的鲜花却开得烂漫。从这个角度看,山屋好似盛装打扮的少女。园子靠近中央的部分是四块对称的平整草地,草地中心有个造型精致的喷泉,四周围着粉红色的花朵。另一头的意大利花园典雅大方,除了绿树和草地,花园中的花一律是白色。喷泉中的水在黑白相间的岩石上静静地流动,对面的山墙上爬满了植物。

这是我最喜欢的景色。从褐色原木的花架走出去，还可以眺望远处的森林和湖泊。温柔的阳光透过树影，让人不想离开。我在华顿的花园流连，并不全然因为这自然的美景。作家本人精通园艺设计，她完成于1897年的第一本书就叫《房屋装饰》。透过一绚烂一典雅的两座花园，华顿向世人展示了艺术家的才华——她从不贪恋上流社会的富足生活，而是孜孜寻求创作的"秘密花园"。

此时，我更为清晰地意识到：我近年来读书和治学的目标，正是要探求这座"秘密花园"的真相。

我于2006年进入南京大学外国语学院攻读英美文学博士学位，在导师杨金才教授的悉心指导下，完成了第一篇关于华顿的论文——《伊迪斯·华顿：与詹姆斯为友》。在研究华顿的过程中，"友谊"这个看似简单平常、实则丰富多变的话题，让我产生了浓厚的学术兴趣。在完成了课题的前期设计和博士论文中期考核后，我幸运地获得了国家留学基金委联合培养博士项目的资助，从2008年8月开始在纽约州立大学奥本尼分校专门从事博士论文的写作。我的美方导师普瑞斯教授是女性主义研究的权威专家。她将自己在英文系的办公室借给我用，还定期与我讨论论文进展，提出了不少极富远见的建议和批评。奥本尼的冬天很冷，平均温度在零下十多度，常常下大雪，我往返于学校的办公室和自己的寓所，心中熊熊燃烧着一个年轻的中国女学者对于华顿研究的热情与希望。

与很多女性作家一样，华顿是随着20世纪60年代第二波女性主义思潮的到来才真正得以进入美国文学正典的。她塑造的一批独立果敢、不入流俗的新女性形象，深受当代西方女性主义批评家青睐，她本人也因之被贴上"新女性"的标签。但我始终觉得，这样的政治标签并不能真正定义华顿的伟大文学价值；甚至在很多地方，我发现华顿对于女性主义有着极其含混和矛盾的态度。于是，我希望能从传统的女性主义解读视角里跳出来，以新的批评思域来评价华顿的文学创作。

本书中文题目定为《伊迪斯·华顿、新女性和世纪之交的友谊话语》，起点在"友谊"，终点在华顿笔下的"新女性"。更具体地说，我将友谊视作一种动态的话语建构和解构的过程，从研究华顿小说中杂糅的

友谊话语入手,考察华顿对新女性议题所进行的反思和文本再现。这里,"友谊"并不是我们日常意义上理解的人际关系范畴,它更带有一种哲学的指涉。自古希腊以降,古典意义上的友谊话语就是基于一种"相似性"的前提,在这种几乎由男性所独占的友谊话语中,女性受压迫的历史身份被悄然抹去。但到了19世纪末和20世纪初,"友谊"重新获得了女权主义者的青睐,被新女性们挪用和再诠释,成为了对抗主流男权话语、谋取性别平等的理想武器。在华顿的小说中,女性间友谊和异性友谊出现得很多,小说主人公们将友谊中体现出来的社会平等视为一种乌托邦。但我在研究中发现,华顿笔下的这些女性人物其实都称不上严格意义上的"新女性",因为她所建构的友谊话语中存在着相似性和差异性之间的二元对立。换言之,她们一方面追求性别的平等,试图得到男性的尊重和认可,另一方面又试图创造全新的社会关系图景,以僭越主流话语。这种矛盾不仅困扰了华顿本人和各个时代的新女性,而且在一定程度上也导致了新女性所追求的平等理想的幻灭。这种幻灭,正是华顿小说中悲剧精神的核心所在。

本书分三个章节,依次探讨三个问题:(1)新女性及其性别平等理想的复杂性;(2)世纪之交商业文化影响下的友谊话语;(3)新女性婚姻改革运动中友谊话语的变迁。第一章从华顿本人传统女性角色和职业女作家身份的冲突出发,讨论她对新女性的背书和批评。本书一再强调,将华顿描述为典型的"新女性"或将其称作"女性主义者"都不尽合理。虽然她总体上赞同新女性对女性主体性的主张,但对她们寻求实践的平等主义理想却持有悲观之见。从婚姻、教育和工作三方面看,新女性所希冀的建立在两性友谊基础上的婚姻理念其实缺乏自洽的基础。在《树之果》中,"孩童型女性"维斯特默和"新女性"贾斯汀经历了各自的婚恋波折,展现了现代女性从"真女性"到"新女性"的痛苦蜕变。贾斯汀的职业精神和智性能力体现了新女性对独立自由的求索,同时也折射出华顿对新女性的女性气质缺失的焦虑,反映了她对现实婚姻中乌托邦式同志情谊的质疑。

第二章将友谊看作具有性别权力象征意义的社会实践形式,重点论述《欢乐之家》中友谊话语的冲突。本章将友谊话语引入传统的异性恋

批评范式中,指出那种强调精神内核的友谊恰恰是对传统两性从属关系的反拨。通过莉莉试图与塞尔登建立友谊以进入其"精神王国"的故事,华顿试图以女性自主、平等自律的条款取代传统模式下的婚姻契约。然而,在商业主义盛行的现代社会里,女性希冀的这种友谊话语与古典的友谊话语会无可避免地产生抵牾。本章阐释了友谊传统中浓厚的男权底色,同时通过莉莉和法瑞希的故事,指出女性友谊的更深层次的危机——即使摆脱了性别差异的限制,女女友谊其实也受控于阶级、教育等外部因素。莉莉的悲剧标志着世纪之交美国社会女性追求独立平等的两性理想的幻灭。

第三章以新女性的友谊话语从19世纪90年代到20世纪20年代的变迁为纲,解读华顿创作于20世纪20年代后期的姊妹篇《哈德逊画派》和《神来了》。本章梳理了第一代新女性对女性同盟的实践和第二代激进的新女性对婚姻模式的实验,并在此基础上重点分析具有鲜明新女性特征的斯皮尔斯如何作为话语主体,参与友谊观念在历史维度上的更新和转变。在《哈德逊画派》中,华顿通过哈洛和韦斯顿之间超越年龄、性别、阶级界限的友情,强调第一代新女性是通过建立智性的两性关系,来实现对传统友谊话语的挑战。《神来了》则是通过哈洛后来追求自由性爱的经历,批评了第二代新女性拒绝婚姻制度、追求两性平等的极端理想。在当时的社会背景下,哈洛注定只能走向悲剧性的孤独,因为新女性的婚姻改革秉承了两性在本质上存在巨大差异的传统观念,始终无法跳出女性在智力上弱于男性的窠臼。

毫无疑问,本书以友谊来解读华顿,其实是为了在更为人性和历史的层面还原华顿作为一个伟大小说家的复杂性和矛盾性。对于她所经历的时代中女性的抗争和悲剧,华顿饱含着深刻的同情、无奈和批判。她激赏新女性的道德勇气和理想主义,但又清楚地意识到理想背后无法逾越的困局。本书的研究,不是要用时髦的理论话语或概念来为当下的华顿研究涂抹新的色彩,而是力图回到历史语境下,回到文学文本中,让读者意识到华顿并不是任何意识形态的代言人,而是一个在自己的"秘密花园"里孤独地徘徊于希望和绝望之间的艺术家。她在那些以悲剧收尾的友谊故事中,教给我们的并不是如何去抵达女性的乌托邦,也不是

让我们完全抛开性别平等的理想,而是让我们自省于性别政治中那些矛盾的不确定性。华顿所描述的女性经验史,并不只是那个世纪之交的美国社会所特有的;它对于全球化的今天,对于各个国家和文化中的女性,都有着超越时代和疆域的启迪。至少对于在20世纪80年代初出生在重庆奉节的我来说,华顿的小说并不是一种异域和异质的东西;我在人生中的很多情感经历、人生困惑和生命感悟,都深植于我个人的华顿阅读史之中。

在本书即将付梓之时,我非常感谢所有曾经为了这本书的完成而帮助过我的师长、朋友和家人。是你们的关心、支持、信任和爱,让我走过了人生中最为艰苦、也是最为充实的几年,从而能够以一本书的形式凝结出我对学术研究的一些粗浅之见。另外,本书中一些核心章节曾以中文论文的形式刊登于《外国文学评论》和《国外文学》等学术期刊,编辑部老师所提的修改意见对于本书的后续修改也起到了很多助益。同时,本课题也在2010年获得了教育部"人文社科青年基金项目"的专门立项支持。特别希望这本书能对我国的华顿研究起到一定的推动作用,也由衷地盼望所有热爱华顿的读者能在阅读本书时不吝赐教,多提宝贵意见!

最后,我要感谢我任教的上海外国语大学对本人学术研究的支持,感谢外教社能在博学文库中收录并资助出版这本书,感谢在审稿中提出过重要修改意见的匿名专家。本书的英文原稿经过美籍专家Ken Ellingwood的悉心校对和润色,在此特别表示感谢。当然,对于文中存在的任何错漏之处,所有责任均由本人承担。

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2014年1月13日

于上海松江

</div>

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations, used in parenthetical citations in the text, refer to the sources indicated below.

BG   *A Backward Glance* (1937) (New York: Scribner, 1964)

FT   *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907) (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004)

FW   *French Ways and Their Meaning* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919)

GA   *The Gods Arrive* (1932) (New York: Appleton, 1932)

HM   *The House of Mirth* (1905) (New York: Bantam Books, 1984)

HRB   *Hudson River Bracketed* (1929) (New York: Scribner's, 1929)

LI   *"Life and I"* (1923) (Novellas and Other Writings, Library of America, 1990)

Contents

Introduction

This dissertation is derived from two apparently simple observations in my reading of Edith Wharton's autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (1934). The first is that Wharton uses several chapters to describe her relationship with friends and sees friendship as a crucial part of what makes life worthwhile and significant. She writes: "I cannot think of myself apart from the influence of the two or three greatest friendships of my life" (BG 169). My second observation is that while Wharton notes how she was exempt from "sensational grievances" and had to "make the best of unsensational material" (BG viii), she nonetheless experienced, an established woman writer, the social turmoil of the turn-of-the-century period, as concepts of femininity, sexuality and gender were defined and redefined. Deeply immersed in an age when many of the quintessential goals of the New Woman were fulfilled, Wharton indeed lived an "extraordinary" life, if not a sensational one.

I come to see these two observations as reflecting the same phenomenon — that is, women were choosing no longer to accept uncritically stories and meanings set down by men. However, within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as patriarchal customs seemed to define all walks of American life, it was simply not possible for women writers

like Edith Wharton, born and raised in an upper-class society, to adopt with ease a New Womanly voice. For this reason, Wharton, as a woman and as a writer, seems to create from and within her "Memories"[1] an elaborated persona and a picture of happy, uneventful life filled largely with stories of friends and acquaintances. By concentrating on her representation of friendship, I re-examine the troubled relations with both sexes for Wharton's women characters. In examining the discursive space of the New Woman, I view the friendship rhetoric as a trope that epitomizes an American society in transformation, and argue that the discourse(s) of friendship should stand as an arena where the conflicting criteria for identifying and evaluating the New Woman are presented and debated. This study explores how Wharton, arguably the most distinguished American woman novelist to write before World War II, reveals through a construction of her female characters an intense longing for equal privileges and relations with men.

The issue of friendship in Edith Wharton's "Backward Glance"

Any investigation of Wharton's representation of friendship raises questions over what significance it has for broader Whartonian scholarship. This question seems especially pertinent in view of the authenticity and credibility of her autobiography, which has already been

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[1] The manuscript of what became *A Backward Glance* collected in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University is titled "Memories." An autobiography, in essence, is a collection of memories, a selective reflection of past life events. For more, see Stratton, 112-115.

identified as a truth told with a "slant."[1] Yet, a review of major critical takes on the subject of friendship illustrates its special appeal for early Wharton critics, as the topic of friendship relates directly to her status as writer, rubbing elbows with luminaries as Henry James and Bernard Berenson. By the 1940s, her first biographer, Percy Lubbock, in an emotionally charged portrayal of Wharton as a "self-made (wo)man" who preferred the company of men, had directed critical attention to the significance of Wharton's relationship with her friends.[2] Departing from Lubbock's depiction of a patron-protégée relationship, feminist critics in the 1960s and 1970s tried to prove that Wharton was never simply a Jamesian disciple.[3] Seeking to portray her as a woman artist in her own right, they endorsed her friendship with male intellectuals by arguing for a writer's need to recast an artistic self. For example, in the widely cited *Edith Wharton & Henry James: The Story of Their Friendship* (1965), Millicent Bell tells a fascinating story of how the well-known literary friendship between the two distinguished American writers bore on each other and on their artistic creation as a whole. And decades later, Susan Goodman sees in Wharton's claim of being a "self-made man" an emphasis on her "femininity" and "equality in the company of men" ("Inner Circle" 14).

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[1] "Omission" or "concealment" in Wharton's autobiography has been addressed by several critics. Lichtman, for instance, connects her "methods of obfuscation and artifice" in fiction and autobiography with the climate of sexual hostility felt in the literature market of the 1930s. See Lichtman, 161.

[2] Lubbock is in large part responsible for the prevailing misunderstanding of Wharton as "a self-made man" and the "pupil," "heiress," "disciple," or "imitator" of Henry James the master. He wrote, for example, "She a writer, a novelist, a colleague of the great old craft? — she was a dazzling intruder, *la femme fatale*, the golden pheasant invading the barnyard." A similar view was expressed by James, who famously named her "the angel of devastation," and his biographer Van Wyck Brooks. See Lubbock, p.11; "Henry James and Edith Wharton," p. 23; Brooks, pp. 170-173, 176.

[3] For more biographical studies of Wharton's friendship, see *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (1975), *No Gifts from Chance: A Biography of Edith Wharton* (1994) and *Edith Wharton* (2007).

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However, the value of the friendship theme in relation to Whartonian criticism before 2000 is mainly biographical. Informative as they are, these thematic studies of friendship characteristic of the spiritual life of a woman writer are restricted primarily to (auto)biographical criticism, and provide only one approach to critical writings on Wharton. For the purpose of this book, then, I will not try to fit *A Backward Glance* into a tradition of female autobiography, which tends to reflect an autobiographer's emphasis on "domestic details, family difficulties, close friends and especially people who influenced them" instead of the public aspects of their lives (Jelinek 7-8). My focus, rather, is the life she creates for herself — "a life bound up in a few close personal ties" (BG 375).

The life Wharton presents in her autobiography rarely involves parents, husband or other intimate family members. When she confronts society's sexism through her voice as a woman writer, she most often uses the portrayal of her relationships with friends as a process of self-realization. What concerns this study, therefore, is not how much truth is disclosed about Wharton's personal life, but what she chooses to omit and what remains in the autobiography — an account of a woman's friendships. Through a study of those friendship stories in Wharton's autobiography, I will discuss here the significance of friends to Wharton's construction of a textual self and the extent to which friendship can be viewed as a discursive practice and an element central to her New Womanhood.

Wharton's life, stretching from the 1860s to the 1930s, came amid an era of transition, from Victorianism to modernism, from patriarchy to empowerment of women. As the traditional value for womanhood gradually eroded, it was challenged by new standards in marriage, sexuality and femininity introduced by a liberating New Woman. But as women made their way toward freedom and independence, they met widespread counter-attacks, of both old and new styles, that restricted their participation in social and economic activities. In the case of

Wharton's book, as the works of an established woman writer, therefore, should be some account of individuality, a story of one's spiritual journey toward self-fulfillment, and of struggles with the pains of growth. At the very beginning, however, the autobiographer brushes aside this useful confessional strategy of telling the "truth." Her reason is that illuminating "every defect and absurdity in others, and every resentment in the writer" could only assume an "air of truthfulness" (BG viii). By beginning *A Backward Glance* with a confessional "[A] First Word," Wharton defines the book's purpose as creating a self through image-making by her own method. If an autobiography is to be "worth reading," she asserts, it should be more than a superficial record of uncongenial events; it should be an explanation of her unique histories, which in her case stem from a life marked by "kindness," "furtherance" and "exquisite understanding" (BG vii). The importance of friendship for understanding this woman writer, in effect, is then shown clearly when she dedicates the book to her friends, "who every year on All Souls' Night come and sit with [me]her by the fire" (BG vii).

After an account of her early memories of old New York society with its stifling decorum and intellectual conservatism comes a long narrative describing the publication of her first novel. The publication of *The Greater Inclination* (1899) makes Wharton, then 37, enter from "a life of wearisome frivolity" into "The Secret Garden" of writing, the inner world where she tastes the forbidden fruit of art (BG 119, 196). She writes,

> At last I had groped my way through to my vocation, and thereafter I never questioned that story-telling was my job ... Meanwhile I felt like some homeless waif who, after trying for years to take out naturalization papers, and being rejected by every country, has finally acquired a nationality. The Land of Letters was henceforth to be my country, and I gloried in my new citizenship ... The publishing of "The Greater Inclination" broke the chains which had held me so long in a kind of torpor. For nearly twelve years I had tried to adjust myself to the